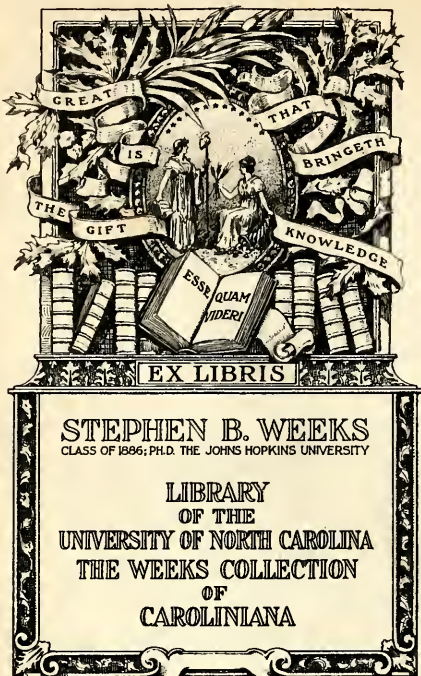


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Malungeon Tree and its Four
Branches

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THE MALUNGEON TREE AND ITS FOUR
BRANCHES. May, 1891

BY WILLIAM ALLEN DROMGOOLE.

SOMEWHERE in the eighteenth century, before the year 1797, there appeared in the eastern portion of Tennessee, at that time the Territory of North Carolina, two strange-looking men calling themselves "Collins" and "Gibson." They had a reddish-brown complexion, long, straight, black hair, keen, black eyes, and sharp, clear-cut features. They spoke in broken English, a dialect distinct from anything ever heard in that section of the country. They claimed to have come from Virginia and many years after emigrating, themselves told the story of their past.

These two, Vardy Collins and Buck Gibson, were the head and source of the Malungeons in Tennessee. With the cunning of their Cherokee ancestors, they planned and executed a scheme by which they were enabled to "set up for themselves" in the almost unbroken Territory of North Carolina.

Old Buck, as he was called, was disguised by a wash of some dark description, and taken to Virginia by Vardy where he was sold as a slave. He was a magnificent specimen of physical strength, and brought a fine price, a wagon and mules, a lot of goods, and three hundred dollars in money being paid to old Vardy for his "likely nigger." Once out of Richmond, Vardy turned his mules' shoes and struck out for the Wilderness of North Carolina, as previously planned. Buck lost little time ridding himself of his negro disguise, swore he was not the man bought of Collins, and followed in the wake of his fellow-thief to the Territory. The proceeds of the sale were divided and each chose his habitation; old Vardy choosing Newman's Ridge, where he was soon joined by others of his race, and so the Malungeons became a part of the inhabitants of Tennessee.

This story I know to be true. There are reliable parties

still living who received it from old Vardy himself, who came here a young man and lived, as the Malungeons generally live, to a ripe old age.

The names "Collins" and "Gibson" were also stolen from the white settlers in Virginia where the men had lived previous to emigrating to North Carolina.

There is, perhaps, no more satisfactory method of illustrating this peculiar race, its origin and blood, than by the familiar tree.

Old Vardy Collins, then, must be regarded as the body, or main stem, in this State, at all events.

It is only of very late years the Malungeons have been classed as *families*. Originally they were *tribes*, afterward *clans*, and at last families. From old Vardy Collins the first tribe took its name—"Collins"—or as they call it, "Collinses." Others who followed Vardy took the name of Collins also. Old Benjamin Collins, one of the pioneers, was older than Vardy, but came to Tennessee a trifle later. He had quite a large family of children, among them Edmund, Mileyton (supposed to have meant *Milton*), Marler, Harry, Andrew, Zeke, Jordan. From Jordan descended Calloway Collins who is still living and from whom I obtained some valuable information.

But to go back a step. Benjamin Collins was known as "old Ben," and became the head of the Ben tribe. Old Solomon Collins was the head of the *Sols*. The race was increasing so rapidly, by emigration and otherwise, that it became necessary to adopt other names than Collins. They fell, curiously enough, upon the first or Christian name of the head of a large family connection or tribe. Emigrants arriving attached themselves as they chose to the several tribes. After awhile, with an eye to brevity, doubtless, the word tribe was dropped from ordinary, every-day use. "The *Bens*," "the *Sols*," meant the Ben and Sol tribes. It appears that no tribe was ever called for old Vardy, although as long as he lived he was the recognized head and leader of the entire people.

This is doubtless due to the fact that in his day the settlement was new, and the people, and the one name *Collins* covered the entire population.

The original Collins people were Indian, there is no doubt about that, and they lived as the Indians lived until some-

time after the first white man appeared among them. All would huddle together in one room (?), sleep in one common bed of leaves, make themselves such necessary clothing as nature demanded, smoke, and dream away the good long days that were so dreamily delightful nowhere as they were on Newman's Ridge.

The Collins tribe multiplied more and more; it became necessary to have names, and a most peculiar method was hit upon for obtaining them.

Ben Collins' children were distinguished from the children of Sol and Vardy by prefixing the Christian name either of the father or mother to the Christian name of the child. For instance, Edmund Ben, Singleton Ben, Andrew Ben, and Zeke Ben, meant that Edmund, Singleton, Andrew, and Zeke were the sons of Ben Collins. Singleton Mitch, Levi Mitch, and Morris Mitch, meant that these were the sons of Mitchel Collins. In the next generation there was Jordan Ben (a son of old Benjamin Collins) who married Abby Sol, had a son who is called (he is still living, as before stated) Calloway Abby for his mother. The wife before marriage takes her father's Christian name; after marriage that of her husband. Calloway's wife, for instance, is Ann Calloway. It is not known, and cannot by any possibility be ascertained at what precise period other races first appeared among the "Collinses." For many years they occupied the Ridge without disturbance. The country was new, wild, and the few straggling settlements were glad of almost any human neighbors. Moreover, these strange people, who were then called the "Ridgemanites," the "Indians," and the "Black-Waterites" (because of a stream called Black Water, which flowed through their territory, the bed of which was, and is, covered with a peculiar dark slate rock which gives a black appearance to the stream), had chosen the rocky and inaccessible Ridge, while the fertile and beautiful valley of the Clinch lay open and inviting to the white settlers. The Ridgemanites were not striving for wealth evidently, and as land was plentiful and neighbors few, they held their bit of creation without molestation or interruption for years. They were all Collinses, as I said; those who followed the first-comers accepting the name already provided them. There was no mixture of blood; they claimed to be Indians and no man disputed it. They were called the "Collins tribe," until having multi-

plied to that extent it was necessary to *divide*, when the descendants of the several pioneers were separated, or divided, into *clans*. Then came the Ben clan, the Sol clan, the Mitch clan, and indeed every prominent head of a large relationship was recognized as the leader of his clan, which always bore his name. There was, to be sure, no set form or time at which this division was made. It was only one of those natural splits, gradual and necessary, which is the sure result of increasing strength.

They were still, however, we must observe, all Collinses. The main *tree* had not been disturbed by foreign grafting, and while all were not blood descendants of old Vardy they, at all events, had all fallen under his banner and appropriated his name.

The tree at last began to put forth branches, or rather three foreign shoots were grafted into the body of it, viz: the English (or white), Portuguese, and African.

The English branch began with the *Mullins* tribe, a very powerful tribe, next indeed for a long time to the Collins tribe, and at present the strongest of all the several branches, as well as the most daring and obstinate.

Old Jim Mullins, the father of the branch, was an Englishman, a trader, it is supposed, with the Indians. He was of a roving, daring disposition, and rather fond of the free abandon which characterizes the Indian. He was much given to sports, and was always "cheek by jowl" with the Cherokees and other tribes among which he mingled. What brought him to Newman's Ridge must have been, as it is said, this love for freedom and sport, and that careless existence known only to the Indians. He stumbled upon the Ridge settlement, fell in with the Ridgemanites, and never left them. He took for a wife one of their women, a descendant of old Sol Collins, and reared a family known as the "*Mullins* tribe." This is said to be the first white blood that mingled with the blood of the dusky Ridgemanites.

By marriage I mean to say (in their own language) they "took up together," having no set form of marriage service. So old Jim Mullins took up with a Malungeon woman, a Collins, by whom he had a large family of children. Some time after he exchanged wives with one Wyatt Collins, and proceeded to cultivate a second family. Wyatt Collins

also had a large family by his first wife, and was equally fortunate with the one for whom he traded her.

After the forming of Hancock County (Tennessee) old Mullins and Collins were forced to marry their wives according to the laws of the land, but all had children and grandchildren before they were lawfully married.

The Mullins tribe became exceedingly strong, and remains to-day the head of the Ridge people.

The African branch was introduced by one Goins (I spell it as they do) who emigrated from North Carolina after the formation of the State of Tennessee. Goins was a negro, and did not settle upon the Ridge, but lower down on Big Sycamore Creek in Powell's Valley. He took a Malungeon woman for a wife (took up with her), and reared a family or tribe. The Goins family may be easily recognized by their kinky hair, flat nose and foot, thick lips, and a complexion totally unlike the Collins and Mullins tribes. They possess many negro traits, too, which are wanting to the other tribes.

The Malungeons repudiate the idea of negro blood, yet some of the shiftless stragglers among them have married among the Goins people. They evade slights, snubs, censure, *and the law*, by claiming to have married Portuguese, there really being a Portuguese branch among the tribes.

The Goins tribe, however, was always looked upon with a touch of contempt, and was held in a kind of subjection, socially and politically, by the others.

The Mullins and Collins tribes will fight for their Indian blood. The Malungeons are not brave; indeed, they are great cowards and easily brow-beaten, accustomed to receiving all manner of insults which it never occurs to them to resent. Only in this matter of blood will they "show fight."

The Portuguese branch was for a long time a riddle, the existence of it being stoutly denied. It has at last, however, been traced to one Denhan, a Portuguese who married a Collins woman.

It seems that every runaway or straggler of any kind whatever, passing through the country took up his abode, temporarily or permanently, with the Malungeons, or as they were then called, the Ridgemanites. They were harmless, social, and good-natured when well acquainted with one — although at first suspicious, distant, and morose. While they

have never encouraged emigration to the Ridge they have sometimes been unable to prevent it.

Denhan, it is supposed, came from one of the Spanish settlements lying further to the South, settled on Mulberry Creek, and married a sister of old Sol Collins.

There is another story, however, about the Denhans. It is said that the first Denhan came as did the first Collins from North Carolina, and that he (or his ancestors) had been left upon the Carolina coast by some Portuguese pirate vessel plying along those shores. When the English wrested the island of Jamaica from Spain, in 1655, some fifteen hundred Spanish slaves fled to the mountains. Their number grew and their strength multiplied. For more than a hundred years they kept up a kind of guerilla warfare, for they were both savage and warlike. They were called "mountain negroes," or "maroons." The West Indian waters swarmed with piratical vessels at that time, the Portuguese being the most terrible and daring. The crews of these vessels were composed for the most part of these "mountain negroes." When they became insubordinate, or in any way useless, they were put ashore and left to take care of themselves. It is said the Denhans were put ashore on the Carolina coast. Their instincts carried them to the mountains, from which *one* emigrated to Newman's Ridge, then a part of the North Carolina territory.

So we have the four races, or representatives among, as they then began to be called, the Malungeons; namely, the Indian, the English, the Portuguese, and the African. Each is clearly distinct and easily recognized even to the present day.

The Portuguese blood has been a misfortune to the first Malungeons, inasmuch as it has been a shield to the Goins clan under which they have sought to shelter themselves and to repudiate the African streak.

There is a very marked difference between the two, however. There is an old blacksmith, a Portuguese, on Black Water Creek, as dark as a genuine African. Yet, there is a peculiar tinge to his complexion that is totally foreign to the negro. He has a white wife, a Mullins woman, a descendant of English and Indian. If Malungeon does indeed mean mixture, the children of this couple are certainly Malungeons. The blacksmith himself is a Denhan, grandson of the old Portuguese emigrant and a Collins woman.

This, then, is the account of the Malungeons from their first appearance in that part of the country where they are still to be found, Tennessee.

It will be a matter of some interest to follow them down to the present day. Unlike the rest of the world they have progressed slowly. Their huts are still huts, their characteristics and instincts are still Indian, and their customs have lost but little of the old primitive exclusive and seclusive abandon characteristic of the sons of the forest.

AT A PATRIARCHS' BALL.

NO-NAME PAPER.

FROM pomps of flowers the music floats
In peals of long luxurious notes,
High o'er the glimmering wax-clad floor
Where lights their tempered largess pour,
And where, gay waifs on music's tide,
With arrowy grace the dancers glide.

How sumptuous all this festal scene !
What maids and youths of daintiest mien !
What gallant men, what queenlike tread
Of matrons rich-bediamonded !
What radiance, fragrance, art, mirth, ease,
—What mockery overmantling these !

For here in our New World, hard-won,
A century since, with sword and gun,
Our New World that by right made bold
We tore from talons of the Old,
In rebel rage whose cry still rings
Through history with the scorn of kings—
How sad such creeds and codes to scan,
Degenerate, unrepblican !

This haughty belle, that simpering beau,
Once roamed Versailles and Fontainebleau ;
This purse-proud fop, that dame chill-souled,
Through White's and Almack's oft have strolled.
We know them each ; their signs live yet —
Snob, egotist, plutocrat, coquette !

Ah, brave Republic, young, fire-eyed,
Were these the boons you prophesied ?
That freedom chiefly should make free
Monopolist, upstart, Pharisee ?
That sweet fraternity should glance
Calm on such glacial arrogance ?
That wise equality should find
Such chasms of caste still rend mankind ?

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